

### REMARKS

There are now pending in this application claims 1-6, 8-20, and 25-28, of which claims 1, 5, 8, and 9 are independent. Claims 7, 12, and 21-24 have been cancelled without prejudice or waiver of their subject matter. Dependent claims 25-28 are newly added.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

Each of independent claims 1, 5, 8, and 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), as being anticipated by Cocklin et al. Given the above amendments to each of the independent claims, together with the following remarks, favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully sought.

Independent claim 1 is directed to a sheet feeding device which comprises a plurality of sheet trays which are vertically disposed for storing sheets, a plurality of sheet feeding means for respectively feeding sheets stored in the plurality of sheet trays, a plurality of transport paths for respectively transporting the sheets fed by the plurality of sheet feeding means and a primary transport path into which the plurality of transport paths flow. The invention is characterized in that a sheet feeding direction of sheets fed from one of the plurality of sheet trays is a direction opposite to a sheet feeding direction of sheets fed from the other. In addition, a sheet transport direction of the sheet which is transported from one of a plurality of transport paths into the primary transport path at an interflow position is the same as a sheet transport direction of the sheet which is transferred from the other transport paths into the primary transport path at an interflow.

Cocklin et al. is directed to an apparatus and method for transporting print media through a print zone of a printing device. In this reference, a sheet transport direction of the sheet which is transported from the paths 62, 64, and 66, at a position at the left edge of the upper surface of belt 34 where the paths in the upper surface of the belt 34 flow into, is opposite from the sheet transport direction of the sheet which is transported from the paths 56, 58, and 60 at a position at the right edge of belt 34 where those paths in the upper surface of belt 34 flow into. However, Applicant understands such structure to be distinguished from the invention as recited in independent claim 1. More specifically, with respect to Cocklin et al., for example, when a sheet is set to the feeders 50, 52, and 54 in face-up state, the sheet will always be in the face-down state at the upper surface of belt 34, regardless of the transportation through paths 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, and 66.

In contrast, in the invention as recited in claim 1, as amended, at the primary transport path, the surface of the sheet which is transported from one of the plurality of sheet transport paths and the surface of the sheet which is transported from the other transport paths are opposite. Thus, when a sheet is set to a plurality of sheet trays in a face-up state, the sheet which is transported from one of the plurality of sheet transport paths will be transported in the face-up state at a primary transport path while the sheet fed from the other transport paths will be transported in the face-down state of the primary transport path. Thus the structure and function of claim 1 is distinct from that featured in Cocklin et al.

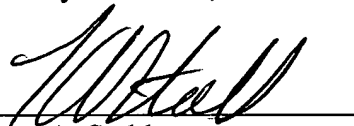
The other independent claims, namely claims 5, 8, and 9 incorporate the above discussed salient features of the invention as recited in claim 1 and therefore are distinguishable over the art for reasons noted above with respect to claim 1.

The remaining claims in the above application are dependent claims which depend either directly or indirectly from one of the above-discussed independent claims and are therefore patentable over the art of record for reasons noted above with respect to those independent claims. In addition, each recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicant respectfully submits that all outstanding matters in the above application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the above application re respectfully sought.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. Stahl', is written over a horizontal line.

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